The ex-storage point price of PDS kerosene is Rs. 4.50 per litre *w.e.f.* the midnight of 22nd-23rd March, 2000.

(d) and (e) Yes, Sir. CBI has registered case No. RC-23(A)/98-Cal. against five officials of FCI posted in Sikkim and Siliguri. As reported by FCI, some private parties and State Government Officials were also involved.

Uniform price for essential commodities

521. SHRI BRATIN SENGUPTA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) the action taken by Government during the last one year to control the prices of essential commodities;

(b) whether it is a fact that essential commodities are costing at huge variation of prices from one to the other corner of the country, States and even in different localities in a district;

(c) if so, the reasons therefore; and

(d) why there is no uniform price for essential commodities?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD): (a) The Government has taken a number of steps to control the prices and augment the availability of essential commodities in the country. Apart from certain long term measures to increase production of essential goods, imports of items having gap in their demand and supply like pulses have been placed under OGL at zero per cent import duty. Export of onion has been placed under quantitative restriction. Some of the essential commodities like rice, wheat, palmolein, sugar and kerosene are also supplied through the outlets of public distribution system at below market prices. Stringent actions are being taken against hoarders, black marketeers and other indulging in unfair trade practices under the Essential Commodities Act and Prevention of Black Marketing and Maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commodities Act by the State/UT Governments.

(b) to (d) The prices of essential commodities generally show

certain variations in different parts of the country due to varietal consumer preferences, transportation cost from producing centres, quantities and time of their procurement, level of local taxes, commission allowed by the manufacturers to the wholesalers, retailers margin and local transportation cost etc.

Unutilisation of Loan Sanctioned for cane Development

522. SHRI LAJPAT RAI: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that loan sanctioned from Sugar Development Fund for the purpose of cane development remained unutilised vastly in almost all the States;

(b) whether the sanctioning authorities have ever tried to find out the causes for that; and

(c) what are the effects of non-utilisation of the sanctioned loans apart from the suffering of the cane development?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD): (a) Loans sanctioned from the Sugar Development Fund for cane development are generally utilized by the sugar units in all the States, though at times the utilization is not timely and is delayed.

Loans from the Sugar Development Fund are disbursed on the basis of (1) utilization certificates received through the respective State Government in respect of the previous loan instalment released and (2) on the recommendation for release of next instalment by the respective State Government.

(b) In case of loan instalments not being utilized in time, the sugar unit as well as the State Government are asked to explain the causes/reasons.

(c) Apart from cane development programme suffering on account of non-utilisation, if any, of the sanctioned loans, there could be an adverse impact on sugar production by the sugar unit that has been sanctioned the loan.